SUMTER COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUBJECT:	Implementation of Public Information Office (PIO) (For Direction)		
REQUESTED	ACTION: For Direction		
Meeting Type:	Regular Meeting	DATE OF MEETING:	2/2/2021
CONTRACT:	⊠ N/A	Vendor/Entity:	
	Effective Date:	Termination Date:	
	Managing Division / Dept:	Administrative Services	
BUDGET IMP	ACT:		
	FUNDING SOURCE:		
Type: N/A	EXPENDITURE ACCO	UNT:	

HISTORY/FACTS/ISSUES:

Within the last decade, there has been a shift in the way people receive their news. Now, many obtain their news and weather updates in real-time through social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and various other platforms. People now have the ability to learn about events as they are unfolding. As social media and emergencies can create a breeding ground for misinformation and disinformation, it is essential to utilize social media listening to identify inaccuracies and respond accordingly to set the record straight with the residents. Depending on the type of event, landlines, or other traditional forms of communication may be unavailable, making social media communications essential for communicating in real-time with impacted citizens.

To become a trusted source of official and accurate information during emergencies, the County has to establish itself beforehand as a trusted and valuable source. This involves regular posting of news/announcements, insight into operations, and timely responses to public inquiries.

The Public Information Office at whatever tier of investment will contribute to public understanding of government policies and raise awareness of the roles/purview of County Officials (including constitutional officers), availability of services, noteworthy trends, and risks to public health and safety. The Public Information Office's responsibilities will include: monitoring media coverage of public affairs; briefing and advising administration; managing media relations; providing information directly to the public; sharing information across the administration; formulating communication strategies and campaigns; researching and assessing public feedback.

The Public Information Office (PIO) directs the implementation of an integrated communications strategy for the County, incorporating media broadcasts, written materials, and social media trends and applications. Their work would include conceptualizing, developing, and implementing communications, media and advertising campaigns, marketing programs, and various special projects that provide clear and timely information relative to the County's operations, departments, and functions. The PIO's focus will be on the conveyance of public information, and the successful representation of the County's interests via social media and traditional news outlets.

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As the investment expands, the ability to become more reactive with large-scale social media influx expands (like with hurricanes and the recent vaccination inquiries) and more proactive with building relations with the community and media.

In the attached survey of surrounding counties, the Public Information Offices of the surrounding counties reside in different locations within the organizational structure, but it typically resides close to the County Administrator. Only counties that responded to our survey have been included.

The integration with Administrative Services will vary—the minimum tier will have none, and the maximum tier will have full integration. The additions of duties that have been added in that specific tier will be listed.

Prepared by: Leslie Smith Grammarly Check ⊠